DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 062 451 UD 012 260

AUTHOR Bracy, Randolph, Jr.
TITLE Compensatory Educational Programs--Is There a Place in Higher Education?
INSTITUTION Florida Univ., Gainesville.
PUB DATE Feb 72
NOTE 16p.; Paper submitted to the First National Congress of Black Professionals in Higher Education, Univ. of Texas, Austin, Texas, April 5-7, 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Admission Criteria; College Admission; *College Curriculum; College Integration; *College Programs; College Students; *Compensatory Education Programs; *Curriculum Development; Disadvantaged Youth; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Change; Educational Needs; Educational Opportunities; Higher Education; *Program Development

ABSTRACT

No program, regardless of its scope, is going to be a panacea in assessing and dealing with the needs of disadvantaged students. What has been done and what is being done in the field of compensatory higher education programs are only the beginning, but they are efforts in the right direction. Until American society recognizes the challenge to provide equal access for all segments of society to higher education, then all efforts in this direction have to be characterized as token. This recognition is based upon the assumption that there must be a dynamic reordering and restructuring of national priorities. Special compensatory programs should be instituted in all institutions of higher learning. There should be a concerted effort by Presidents, Deans, Department Chairmen, and Instructors to exhibit a willingness to create a conducive learning and living atmosphere for disadvantaged students. Consideration of curriculum changes and modifications are essential and must be instituted to assist disadvantaged students. Consideration within the traditional curriculum to lighter academic loads for disadvantaged students is advisable, so as to allow the disadvantaged student time to complete a four year degree in five or six years. [This document has been reproduced from the best available copy.] (Author/JM)

ED 062451

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

COMPENSATORY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS-- IS THERE A PLACE IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

SUBMITTED TO THE FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS
OF BLACK PROFESSIONALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

University of Texas
Austin, Texas

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Randolph Bracy, Jr.
Director
Student Special Services
University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida

UD012260

February 1972

Taxpayer's educational welfare--nonaccountability in education--athletic jock programs--second rate menial education, glorified vocational programs are terms that reflect a myriad of arguments that are used to demean the existence of compensatory programs for disadvantaged youth. Lately, many a sophisticated scholar has scoffed at the supposed avalanche of compensatory programs; saying that these programs have no place in higher education. These scholars move under the assumption that education should remain in the hallowed groves of academe for the chosen few of an elite aristocracy.

Is there truth in these statements that compensatory programs have no place in higher education? This paper deals with attacks upon such programs and attempts to establish counter-arguments in support of compensatory education.

What is compensatory education and what is its role in higher education? Ironically enough, compensatory education is often misclassified with regards to its role in higher education. Compensatory education programs throughout the United States are given many titles: education for high risk students, education for the culturally deprived, education for the culturally disadvantaged, education for the environmentally disadvantaged, etc. Whatever the designation, a working definition of compensatory education is needed before this problem can be adequately treated in this paper.

Robert Williams refers to compensatory programs as educational programs for disadvantaged students whose educational and economic backgrounds are considered markedly inferior to that of regular students.[1] John Egerton says that compensatory educational programs are for economically poor students who, according to traditional predictive criteria, are not likely to succeed in an institution of higher learning.[2] Clemont Vontres describes these programs as education for population segments beset by educational and economic disability.[3]

It has been this author's experience that students who compensatory programs usually serve, fall under one of the following general characteristics: (1) these students are financially disadvantaged, (2) they experience environmental deprivation, (3) they lack exposure to traditional educational experiences and, (4) they usually perform inadequately on standardized intelligence tests. Panos and Astin substantiate this stance by saying that generally, disadvantaged students in higher education, can be identified as: (1) those students who lack substantial financial resources, (2) those students who score low on standardized tests,

---

[1]Robert L. Williams, "What Are We Learning From Current Programs for Disadvantaged Students?", (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968). p. 275.

[2]John Egerton, "Higher Education for 'High Risk' Students", (Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation, 1968) p. 49.

[3]Clemont F. Vontres, "Cultural Barriers in the Counseling Relationship", Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLVIII, p. 17.

(3) those having erratic high school records, and (4) those having racial characteristics that place them at a disadvantage with typical college students (e.g. African-American, American Indian, Spanish speaking American).[4]

In recent years, many American institutions of higher learning have endeavored to assist youth from educationally deprived backgrounds. Egerton states that over one half of the colleges and universities in America have special programs for disadvantaged students.[5]

First impression on the aforementioned data suggests that higher education is meeting its committment to the disadvantaged setments of our population. However, contrary to popular belief, Egerton states that predominantly black colleges and private institutions have made greater impact on education for the disadvantaged than public institutions.[6] It has been this writer's experience that for many years before it became fashionable to deal with the needs of disadvantaged youth, black colleges set the precedent for higher education to follow. With reference to private schools utilizing the services of the ISSP (Intensive Summer Studies Program) in conjunction with consortium efforts of Harvard, Yale and Columbia demonstrate some of the contributions of private schools in the direction of compensatory education.

What have these schools done, and what are these schools doing which should be taken note of in reordering the priorities of public institutions in dealing with disadvantaged students.

---

[4]R. Panos and A. Astin, "Attrition Among College Students", American Educational Research Journal, 1968, p. 5.

[5]Egerton, op. cit., p. 49.

[6]ibid., p. 50.

The white private institutions and the black colleges seek to identify the disadvantaged student. This is no easy task, since many disadvantaged students considered high risk on some campuses might possibly be among the intellectual elite on other campuses.[7] This is especially true at the University of Florida for students who enter their compensatory program. At many institutions, these students would be considered superior students, but at this institution they are considered deprived students in comparison with the regular student population.

Using the general characteristics mentioned earlier, the black college and the white private institutions identify these students. From this point, these institutions depart from the traditional curriculum to programs which: (1) place greater emphasis on reading and language development, (2) emphasize parental and community involvement, (3) argue for increased use of specialized personnel (i.e. social workers, guidance counselors, psychiatrists, etc.), (4) rely heavily on guidance as an integral component within these programs, and (5) utilizes new and innovative curricular approaches (i.e. team teaching).[8] Even though the University of Florida is neither a private or black institution, many of the findings of these institutions have been incorporated into the compensatory program at the University of Florida. Supportive services are provided to each freshman student entering their compen-

---

[7]Williams, op. cit., p. 275.

[8]E.W. Gordon and D.A. Wilkerson, "Compensatory Education for the Disadvantaged", (College Entrance Examination Board, 1966), p. 9.

satory program. The most novel of these supportive services is the utilization of the student paraprofessional counselor.

Students who serve as paraprofessional counselors are selected from previous year's program students. The term "paraprofessional" is appropriate in that these students receive professional training provided through resources from the University's Counseling Center. This training consists of exposure to methodology, techniques and approaches used in many counseling situations. These student counselors are directly responsible to a professional counselor hired by the program to supervise their activities. These paraprofessionals are housed strategically in the dormitory areas to assist program students in adjusting to a living and learning situation.

The underlying assumption for the supportive services is that these special services enhance these students' chances for success at the institution and a smoother transition into campus life. However, it has been this author's experience that the more a student is able to assimilate into the conventional institutions' life, the better he performs academically within the particular social setting. On the other hand, if a student shows an inability to relate comfortably within the particular social setting, his academic performance suffers. Panos and Astin substantiate this point stating: if low income minority students are admitted to a white institution in which he is socially acceptable, his motivation

and achievement rate/level are likely to rise, since he wants to be accepted. In order for him to achieve this social acceptance, he will, usually take on the values of the predominant group. However, if he feels that the standards are much higher than those that he is accustomed to and he is not socially accepted, more than likely he will not try to succeed.[9]

Some critics of compensatory education argue that these programs ignore the individual and try to assimilate these students as closely as possible to the institution's norm for regular students. Of all the indictments made against compensatory education, this one comes closest to the truth. It has been found that the majority of compensatory programs seem to try to make disadvantaged students as much like the kind of student with whom the institution has traditionally been successful.[10]

Most of these programs have an underlying assumption that verbal skills (i.e. writing, reading, listening and speaking) are the most acute deficiencies of disadvantaged students. It is felt that if these students are to achieve a measure of success in higher education, basic mastery of these skills is essential. In many cases, some institutions have modified their curriculum to teach standard English as a second language.[11] In addition to verbal skills, institutions are now seeking innovations in the area of quantitative

---

[9]Panos, op. cit., p. 6.

[10]Joseph Durham, "Compensatory Education, Who Needs It?", (Clearinghouse, volume 39, 1970), p. 28.

[11]Leslie Berger, "College for Ghetto Youth", (New York: City University of New York, 1968), p. 8.

skills. The University of Florida has proposed an Essential Skills Course. In essence, this course takes under consideration that many disadvantaged students begin their matriculation with deficiencies that are both verbal and quantitative in nature. This course given for credit is designed to give all entering disadvantaged students a preparatory course in the fundamental skills necessary for success at the institution.

As mentioned earlier,, the University of Florida maintains a compensatory program, the Expanded Educational Opportunities Program, for freshmen students who are not normally admissible to the institution. These students may enter only in the summer immediately after their graduation from high school.

In the summer of 1971, 122 students entered this program. Ninety percent of these students had total scores on the Florida Senior Placement Test (an instrument comparable to the Princeton College Boards) below the 25th percentile of regularly admitted University of Florida freshmen. Noting this disparity, a flexible program was designed by the University of Florida's Reading and Study Skills center to increase reading speed and comprehension. Of the 122 students, 73 students elected this special reading program. At the completion of the summer quarter, their first quarter in attendance, the total Cumulative Grade Point Average was 2.19 out of a possible 4.00 (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, E=0). This average compared favorably with the cumulative Grade Point Average for regularly admitted freshmen of 2.25.

Overall, in evaluating compensatory programs for disadvantaged students, it has been found that most of these programs are too new to evaluate their effectiveness. Students who began in the University of Florida are now in their second year of attendance. This data is inconclusive and will remain incomplete until these students finish their fourth year. However, existing data suggests that the attrition of disadvantaged students is generally comparable to that of regular students. In the summer of 1970, 191 students were admitted through the Expanded Educational Opportunities Program. Four quarters later, all but thirteen (13) were still enrolled. Of this 13, seven (7) had transferred to other colleges. The accumulative grade point average of the remaining students, for four quarters, was 2.25/4.00. This figure compares favorably with the regular University of Florida freshman accumulative grade point average of 2.32/4.00. Williams gives creditability stating that it has been found that the academic mortality rate of high risk students has been no higher than that for regular students.[12] Critics of these programs pose the question, can these successes be attributed to existing special programs? Berger says that research from institutions that have maintained control groups have brought back a positive answer.[13] Williams further states that it has been found that grades achieved in college are markedly improved over

---

[12]Williams, p. 275.

[13]Berger, op. cit., p. 9.

high school grades and higher than predicted from scores on standardized admission tests.[14]

Concerning the critics argument that compensatory programs are merely athletic jock programs.... at the University of California at Los Angeles over 1900 students enter their compensatory program yearly. This program is called the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP). In 1971, there were only 15 athletes enrolled.[15] In 1970-71, of the students enrolled in the University of Florida's Expanded Educational Opportunities Program, only five (5) were athletes. This data should suggest that many of the major institutions are not using these programs as subterfuge in gaining admission for athletes.

In selecting students for the University of Florida's compensatory program, extensive research is done to assure that those students who demonstrate the best probability of success are selected. The following criteria is used in the selection process: (1) any student selected for the program must have exhibited some measure of success, preferably in high school grades or promising test scores, (2) any student selected must have exhibited some form of leadership ability, preferably in school organizations, (i.e. student government, honor society, dramatics, band, etc.) and (3) recommendations from designated persons of authority in the school

---

[14]Williams, p. 275.

[15]Ron Firmite, "Buried Under A Sea of Troubles", (New York: Sports Illustrated, 1971), p. 29.

setting (i.e. principals, guidance counselors, teachers). Owing to the fact that this criteria is generally also used in selecting regular students, intangible selection criteria as initiative, emotional toughness and achievement motivation play a significant role. This author subscribes to the rationale that subjective evaluations in the selection process of disadvantaged students should be weighed more carefully than the tangible objective criteria used by many admission officers.

From conversations, personal interviews, group interactions, and rap sessions, this writer experiences has been colored by the fact that many of these disadvantaged students enter institutions of higher learning with an attitudinal problem. This attitudinal problem can in great part be attributed to the fact that they lack perspective as to the value of a college education. They view success in terms of material gains and immediate tangible objects. More explicitly, instead of viewing the hallowed halls of Ivy as the arena for honing the skills to wage war, many of these students view institutions of higher learning as the arena for waging war without sharpening the skills essential for waging war. To counteract this problem, it is my suggestion that an intensive orientation program should commence immediately with these students upon arrival at the institution. This orientation should be handled by the guidance component of these programs, whereby these students would be exposed to the career professions available and to the monetary value of a college education.

On the other side of the coin, the powers (college administrators, deans, department chairmans, and instructors) to be have shown an insensitivity to these programs that has to be changed if all segments of society are to be met.

As mentioned earlier, it cannot be assumed that these compensatory programs are the answers to all of the deficiencies of disadvantaged students. However, in assessing these programs, it is this author's opinion, that there are numerous agents that influence the success or failure of these programs. The most prominent agents are (1) the hiring of insensitive personnel who show no familiarity with local conditions and ethnic culture, (2) poor program management with relation to the disadvantaged students and, (3) the piecemeal funding by these institutions of higher learning and the Congress of the United States.

There are numerous other agents which determine the success of these programs, but to this author, the aforementioned are the most obvious.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking a retrospective glance at many of the findings mentioned in this paper, it is my contention that the entire spectrum of higher education is changing. Changing yes, but changing too slow.

It has been remarked over the years that education as an institution has always taken the conservative road to change. More explicitly speaking, it takes education 50 years before innovation and change can proliferate down through this discipline. With higher education in reference to compensatory education, the latter statement stands as a truism.

It is my thinking, that no program, regardless to how comprehensive or extensive in nature, is going to be a panacea in assessing and dealing with the needs of disadvantaged students. What has been done, and what is being done are only the beginning, but they are efforts in the right direction. Until American society recognizes the challenge to provide equal access for all segments of society to higher education, then all efforts in this direction have to be characterized as token. This recognition is based upon one assumption, there must be a dynamic reordering and restructuring of national priorities. Institutions of higher learning must dedicate themselves to the principle that they have

an obligation to meet the needs of all segments of our society, including those segments that have been barred from the ivy and stainless steel towers of learning.

The following suggestions concerning compensatory higher education might be of great value:

(1) Special compensatory programs should be instituted in all institutions of higher learning so that inroads can be made in lessening the disparities between low income minority students and the regular student population at these institutions.

(2) There should be a concerted effort by the academic powers (Presidents, Deans, Department Chairmen, instructors) to exhibit a willingness to create a conducive learning and living atmosphere for disadvantaged students.

(3) Consideration of curriculum changes and modifications are essential and must be instituted to assist disadvantaged students.

(4) Consideration within the traditional curriculum to lighter academic loads for disadvantaged students is advisable, so as to allow the disadvantaged student time to complete a four year degree in five (5) to six (6) years.

(5) Consideration should be given to a reevaluation of traditional grading procedures and methods so as to determine the best ways to evaluate achievement among low income minority students.

(6) Additional supportive services (i.e. student paraprofessional counselors) should be maintained to assist disadvantaged students in making an easier transition into campus life.

An old Chinese proverb accentuates the struggle of compensatory programs in higher education: "a journey of one thousand miles begans with one step". The initial step has been taken, but a long and arduous journey still remains.....

REFERENCES

SPEECHES

Berger, Leslie. "College For Ghetto Youth", City University of New York, New York, 1968.

BOOK

Gordon, Edmund W. Compensatory Education For The Disadvantaged, College Entrance Examiniation Board, 1966.

JOURNALS

Durham, Joseph T. "Compensatory Education, Who Needs It?" The Clearinghouse, September, 1969, pages 18 - 28.

Egerton, John. "Higher Education For 'High Risk' Students", Southern Educational Foundation, 1968, pages 13 - 49.

Firmite, Ron. "Buried Under A Sea Of Trouble", Sports Illustrated, November, 1971, page 29.

Panos, R. and Astin, A. "Attrition Among College Students", American Educational Research Journal, 1968, page 5.

Vontres, Clermont. "Cultural Barriers In The Counseling Relationship", Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 48, pages 17 - 19.

Williams, Robert L. "What Are We Learning From Current Programs For Disadvantaged Students?", Journal of Higher Education, Vol. XL, April, 1969, pages 274 - 285.